BRITISH COLUMBIA
The Best Place on Earth

Education Report

Second Multi-Site Webcast a Success

Minister Shirley Bond took a moment to speak with Jordan Ross, a Grade 10 student at S.J. Willis Education Centre during the second annual Interactive Innovations conference.

The Province hosted the second annual Interactive Innovations conference Feb. 28 – March 2. The conference used the latest webcasting technology to broadcast to and from multiple locations, letting five B.C. communities share their expertise and learn from others. For the first time, the conference expanded beyond B.C. by linking in three communities from Alberta as well as Whitehorse. Read more.

Message from Minister Shirley Bond

On Feb. 5 our government released the second annual report on class size in B.C. public schools. The report shows that class sizes were reduced in every single school district. That's a direct result of Bill 33, the legislation brought in last summer that set limits for class size and special needs students.

The report shows that of the over 9,700 grades 4-7 classes in B.C. only 85 have more than 30 students. Compare that to last year – before Bill 33 came into effect – when 648 classes had more than 30 students. Overall, more than 95 per cent of all classes in the province now have 30 or fewer students.

Bill 33 also reduced the number of classes with four or more special needs students by almost 1,400 from last year.

Earlier this week, at the Learning Roundtable in Vancouver, I had an opportunity to engage in a healthy discussion around the report on class size with our education partners. Through our government's funding commitments, our commitment to responsible class size and composition, and by working closely with all of our education partners, I know we will continue to make progress towards our goal of becoming the best educated, most literate jurisdiction in North America.

HOT TOPIC

The second annual report on class size shows that all 60 districts have complied with the Bill 33 legislation.

The report also shows there are 1,152 more classes this year. That's because there are 176 more teachers and 406 more teacher assistants even though there are some 12,000 fewer students. It is clear that school districts hired more staff this year to meet the new class-size requirements.

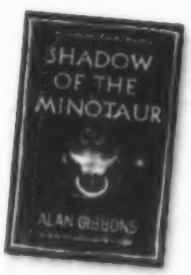
There's a reason districts were able to add more staff: government has increased funding to school districts this year by $470 million – the single largest increase in education funding ever. This record-level of funding, combined with Bill 33, has resulted in more classes, more teachers, more teacher-librarians and more special education assistants at a time when there are fewer students.

Bill 33 ensures that parents and teachers have a say in how classes are organized, and balances many of the concerns we heard at the Learning Roundtable, in my meetings with student and parent groups, and during my visits to schools and school districts. Bill 33 takes the views of education partners into account.

While the latest class-size report shows that Bill 33 is working, government will carry out an automatic review of the class-size and composition legislation. The Learning Roundtable will undertake the review.

Government will continue to monitor class sizes throughout the province and work with parents, students, teachers and school districts to ensure balanced class size and composition.

Parents and students can access class-size information about their school through the school profile tool at www.achievebc.ca online.



Shadow of the Minotaur
Alan Gibbons

Reading Corner

Do you know a boy that loves video games and thinks books are boring? Have him read Shadow of the Minotaur in which 13-year-old Phoenix steps into a Greek mythology based game created by his computer-programming father. This novel was shortlisted for the Carnegie Medal and won the 'Book I Couldn't Put Down' category of the Blue Peter Book Awards. The first installment of the Legendeer Trilogy, this book is suitable for students in grades 7-8.